

Minutes
Regular meeting of the City of Reading Planning Commission
March 24, 2015 at 7:00 pm

Members present:

Ermete J. Raffaelli, Chairman
Michael E. Lauter, Secretary
Wayne Jonas Bealer, Assistant Secretary
William F. Cinfici

Staff present:

Andrew W. Miller, Planning Office
Deborah A.S. Hoag, Department of Public Works

Others present:

Jason P. Shaner, Impact Engineering Group Inc.
Patrick J. Dolan, Dolan Construction Inc.
Pablo Tejada, Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading & Berks County
W. Bradford White, Olivet Boys & Girls Club of Reading & Berks County
Gregg A. Bogia, Bogia Engineering Inc.
Lee C. Olsen, Olsen Design Group Architects Inc.
Garreth Donly, Our City-Reading Inc.

Chairman Raffaelli called the March meeting to order, and asked for acceptance of the agenda. Mr. Cinfici moved to accept the March 24th agenda, as presented. Mr. Bealer seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the March agenda.

Subdivision and Land Development:

Pendora Park Olivet Boys & Girls Club – final land development plan [0:00.47]

Mr. Shaner introduced the project team, and acknowledged the updated staff reviews, intending some final edits. He recalled another meeting with the Public Works Department, and some additional modeling of the Egelman Dam inundation zone. He said the attorneys had since conferred on the appropriate indemnification language. Ms. Hoag also believed that issued to be resolved. Mr. Shaner explained other edits to resolve some confusion over the elevation isolines. Asked about the final details of the pavilion relocation, Mr. Shaner said notes defer the final decision to the City officials charged with overseeing it. Mr. Miller considered the detail provided to be sufficient, and preferably vague to provide Public Works some flexibility in its installation.

On Mr. Miller's recommendation, Mr. Bealer moved to grant a conditional final approval, based on revisions satisfying the latest Planning Office and Public Works Department reviews, updated indemnification notes to the satisfaction of the Law Department, and to grant waivers of the required curbing and sidewalk standards. Mr. Cinfici seconded. Mr. Miller reported that, that afternoon, he'd received what appeared to be the Water Authority's approval of the water main relocation, which should be referenced on the plan. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally approve the Olivet Club's 'Pendora Park' final plan.

Resolution #13-2015

DoubleTree Hotel Project – revision-to-record land development plan [0:10.18]

Mr. Bogia introduced the project team, and presented the proposed changes to this downtown project already under construction. He said they'd redesigned the service area on the Court Street side, to better accommodate the dumpsters, the loading dock and an emergency generator. He described changes to the landscaping plan, in order to keep the planting areas further separated from the building, due to water penetration and sinkhole formation concerns. He said the curb ramp design was being modified to conform to the current specifications. Asked about a small change in the measured lot area, he referred to differences between the Michael C. DiPaolo PLS and Stackhouse Bensinger Inc. surveys, preferring to match what was recorded with the deed. Mr. Miller asked that they update the reference on the plan (Note 33). Regarding a reduced area covered by an encroachment easement for the neighboring church foundation, he thought it a simple correction limiting its coverage to the minimum necessary. Mr. Miller thought the revised depiction left part of that foundation uncovered. Mr. Bogia offered to double check, and characterized most of the other notes as unchanged from the previously recorded plans. Mr. Miller suggested some appropriate updating of the other notes, such as the change in room total from 217 to 209. Mr. Donly clarified that those eight rooms were eliminated for additional meeting space. Mr. Miller pointed out some discrepancies in the brick pattern details, wondering whether the herringbone or running-

bond arrangement was intended. Mr. Bogia thought some of each, differing between the street side and the Hotel side of the concrete sidewalk, and intended to clarify the plan notes. Mr. Miller felt the notes should also describe and quantify the green roof volume, with a brief explanation of the change vis-à-vis the roof-top mechanical equipment. Ms. Hoag asked for additional detail on the maintenance responsibilities for the stormwater facilities. Mr. Bogia said that was further described within the post construction stormwater management plan, per the Berks County Conservation District's requirements for permit termination, but could be summarized in the plan notes. Asked if the concrete planting containers left sufficient clearance on the sidewalk, Mr. Miller indicated their placements as where would ordinarily be tree pits. Asked about the potential conflict with on-street parking, Mr. Donly recalled that parking being eliminated with the original plan, while still a possible consideration for bus drop offs and delivery trucks. Mr. Miller advised increasing the size of the containers, for the benefit of anything planted in them. Mr. Donly explained their assumed location of an electrical duct bank, based on the location of a transformer box and the representation of Met-Ed (FirstEnergy Corp.) officials, as the reason to eliminate the planted trees. He mentioned telecommunications services, yet to be connected, as more conflicts in addition to the standard utilities. An accessible curb ramp, on the Court Street side, may prevent another tree pit there. He offered to provide larger containers in the proposed locations. He doubted sidewalk clearance would be at issue, except on the Court Street side. He mentioned trying to substitute the green space, in another way and as close to the quantity of the original plan as possible. Asked about what appeared to be a duplication in the painted 'stop bars' for the 8th and Penn Streets intersection, Mr. Bogia described them as the existing and proposed locations. Mr. Miller advised keeping the existing features to the appropriate plan sheets. He noticed two different details for the porte-cochère. Mr. Bogia confirmed that they each apply. Asked if he had any other issues with the Planning Office review, Mr. Bogia said not, intending to address each comment and hoping for a conditional approval.

Asked for an update to the façade design, Mr. Olsen distributed his most-recent rendering, and described the latest signage program, that he considered to be somewhat 'classier' than the standard package. It would eliminate some of the text, and be 'back lit'. He said the Dryvit paneling has been installed and caulked, and most of the windows. He said they are beginning the installation of the faceted glass around the suites on the corner of the tower. He described a 'basket-weave' pattern in the paneling, and the windows intended to daylight the 'back-of-house' area surrounding the ballroom. He said it would extend 'about halfway back' on the North 8th Street façade. Mr. Miller felt that any fenestration on that side would help mitigate the otherwise blank effect of that wing. Mr. Olsen agreed, adding that the diminishing building height, relative to the prevailing grade, would also minimize that effect. Mr. Miller asked about the status of a roof-top sundeck depicted in the rendering. Mr. Olsen said it had been eliminated, and the pool there moved to the basement level. Ms. Hoag suggested additional landscaping in the vicinity of the stair tower. Mr. Donly offered additional containers. Mr. Olsen mentioned the possibility of hanging planters along the railing elements, for a seasonal color scheme. Describing the outdoor dining space for the restaurant, he said they had considered a fence, but opted for a solid wall for some privacy and the separation from the public sidewalk. He said the roof of the porte-cochère would also be planted in the 'green roof' sedum. Mr. Miller alluded to his review letter, and intended to email a summary of the additional points made. Ms. Hoag mentioned some concerns with the curb ramps and alignment of the crosswalks, but consented to a conditional approval. Mr. Miller asked about the anticipated completion. Mr. Donly expected construction to be completed by September 30th, with another month scheduled for the 'furniture, fixtures and equipment' fit out, and a planned opening in early November. He said a few events were already booked for December and January, which he credited to the reputation of its in-coming general manager (Craig Poole).

Mr. Bealer moved to grant a conditional revision approval, if meeting the latest Planning Office and Public Works Department reviews. Mr. Cinfici seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to conditionally approve the 'DoubleTree Hotel Project' revision plan, modifying their prior approvals of May 2009 and October 2010.

Resolution #14-2015

Tank Storage Addition-Building 6 (IFS Industries Inc.) – waiver consideration [0:52.11]

Mr. Miller mentioned a few situations arising from the City's 'OneStopShop' forum, for projects either short of the minimum square footage requiring a formal review or so limited in their outward effect that he suggested waiving or modifying the planning process may be appropriate. The first, IFS's plan for a 1730-square-foot addition on the west end of its approximately 21,000-square-foot existing building (700 Arlington Street), exceeds the 800-square-foot threshold, but will only be added for material storage, and over existing loading docks. He recalled two different meetings with the building officials, considering the material hazards, quantities and spill containment. He said the expansion wouldn't require any new utility connections or traffic considerations, and suggested the Commission consider waiving the full land development procedure, in exchange for a final edit of the drawing already provided. Ms. Hoag suspected the addition might even reduce traffic, given the efficiency in accommodating bulk deliveries. Mr. Miller presented the 'plan' – an aerial photo, with a sketch of the proposed

expansion and notes detailing its size, use and occupancy – and indicated the current location of four 7500-gallon tanks (of the five planned) lying in the rear yard of the property. He said it would be difficult to see the expansion from a public way. Mr. Bealer voiced his consent, considering the lack of new disturbance. Mr. Miller suggested a formal vote, on the condition of a permanent record of any final revisions for the Planning Office file. Ms. Hoag noted that the new capacity, and its process piping, would require modifications to their industrial-discharge permit.

Mr. Bealer moved to waive the formal land development process, in exchange for a final site plan from the C2C Design Group detailing the ‘Tank Storage Addition’ to Building 6. Mr. Cinfici seconded, seeking clarification of the expansion’s size relative to the Commission’s threshold, concerned about possibly setting a precedent. Mr. Miller confirmed that it did exceed that measure, requiring the action, but that he’d likely recommend waivers of other projects similarly limited in their scope and impact. And the Commission voted unanimously to so modify the land development requirements for IFS Industries.

Resolution #15-2015

Lentz Milling Company – waiver consideration [1:04.17]

Mr. Miller explained that he’d since clarified the scope of the intent at their distribution center (2045 North 11th Street), and determined that it did not meet the ‘land development’ definition. He said they intend to re-grade an area of existing paving for an expansion of their loading area and docks. He said the elevation adjustment would provide for five additional loading bays, and may require the rerouting of some existing stormwater piping. *[Mr. Lauter joined the meeting and the prior reviews were briefly summarized.]* Mr. Miller said the matter didn’t require any formal action.

Alvernia University (Francis Hall) – waiver consideration [1:14.43]

Mr. Miller, still needing some additional information, relayed his understanding of a plan to alter an area of existing paving at the rear of Francis Hall, already used for parking but never defined by designated spaces. He said the University wants to expand it, but differently than shown on their recorded ‘South Campus Project’ plans, last formally approved at the August 23, 2011 meeting. He wondered where to stop short of requiring formal revisions for any and every change to a record plan, and recognized the University’s use of the same civil-engineering firm for each of its projects. He knew they kept an accurate base map of every change, and expected there’d eventually come a larger project, requiring another recorded plan and with it the as-built details to that point. He said the drawing provided didn’t print clearly, but appeared to alter the previous ‘radial’ design of the parking. He mentioned a consideration of the emergency access provided via a reinforced pedestrian path, and assurances that it wouldn’t be compromised. He said the area affected is greater than that ordinarily associated with the ten-space limit exempted from the Commission’s review, but understood the site to be under the coverage of open permit (NPDES) for the disturbance. He suggested a waiver in exchange for a clearer comparison between the approved and modified designs, and assurances that the base mapping is maintained. He acknowledged that two small structures were being removed, and that they’re claiming a reduction in impervious cover. Ms. Hoag agreed that the difference between plans must be clarified. Mr. Miller said he’d only received it the day before, and intended to seek that clarification before a final disposition.

Mr. Miller noted that the foregoing considerations and actions were specific to the subdivision and land development processes, and didn’t relieve their applicants from any zoning or other permitting obligations.

Other business:

review the draft February 24, 2015 meeting minutes [1:28.48]

Mr. Cinfici suggested a couple minor changes. Mr. Lauter moved to accept the February meeting minutes. Mr. Cinfici seconded. And the Commission voted unanimously to accept the February 24th meeting minutes, as modified.

Resolution #16-2015

The Commission discussed the activity of the Blighted Property Review Committee and anticipated changes to its process, the planned repair of a partial collapse (June 12, 2014) of 34 South 5th Street, a prospect for converting shipping containers into small houses, demolitions and the role of the Centre Park Artifacts Bank.

Mr. Lauter moved to adjourn the March meeting. Mr. Cinfici seconded. And the Commission adjourned the March 24th meeting. – 9:00p